

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
Minutes, December 8, 2011
Acton Memorial Library

Members present: Walter Foster (chair), Peter Ashton, Roland Bourdon, Andy Magee, Betsy Mercier, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Janet Adachi, Tory Beyer, Doré Hunter, Ken Sghia-Hughes

Also present: Steve Noone (Finance Committee observer), Roland Bartl (staff)

The meeting was opened at 7:10pm.

The Minutes from 10/13/2011 and 11/17/2011 meetings were approved unanimously as written.

OVERALL PROJECTS REVIEW

The Committee members in turn commented on each proposal submitted to the Committee for the current funding cycle. The following comments were noted (notes taken by Roland Bartl):

Open Space Set – Aside

- See where the budget falls – waiting to see the numbers – a bit more or less maybe

SA station landscaping

- Iffy in legal review – judgment call
- Wetlands related native landscaping required by ConCom as part of station project Order of Conditions
- History of project permitting brought in MHC and HDC under Federal Regulations

HP loan program/revolving fund

- Complex requirements
- Janet offers consult with Treasurer/Town Manager
- Good idea/concept
- Not an entirely new idea/concept
- May not be as complicated as it seems at first blush
- What is the rationale for the \$150K number?
- Appropriate proposal.
- Noted other loan programs funded with CPA, but for housing only.
- If home rule petition is required, funding would seem premature.

ACHC – Regional Housing Services Program

- Acton in competition for spot in consortium
- Would seem to make ACHC Chairman succession planning easier

- Amount based on what Concord is paying for this service
- Similar to organizations looking over CR's
- Are we committing to this permanently?
- It supports community housing
- Looks like an opportunity for benefit to the Town of Acton
- Concerns about efficiency and quality control for Acton in a regional set-up
- Nancy T. would be a good quality control monitor to start with.
- Ask Nancy T. about background / history in the other towns.
- CPC to pilot and Town GF to take over after 2 years if successful?

AHA Development Funds (Sachem Way)

- Financing for project is tough and rocky.
- Requested amount would cover anticipated funding shortfall.
- We already started it – should come to a reasonable conclusion
- Need to see and understand better numbers and reasons for shortfall; need to get comfortable with the amount.
- What are the other funders and their commitment level?
- There are detractors
- Status with neighbor?
- When would money get spent?
- What percentage of the total project cost is CPA funding?

FOLF Project

- Hope it will relieve pressure to build fields at Morrison Farm
- Synergy with skateboard park
- Smart growth to do things where there is already the infrastructure and context
- Leary field was success
- Bonding proposed
- Possibly a significant (?) wetlands crossing involved – check with proponent/Tom.
- Need to see counsel's opinion
- Question about eligibility
- Multi-year commitment
- What the other recreation project that have been on hold? This does not answer them.
- Hard to dispute need for more field space
- Many Acton kids are not elite athletes – facility needs to serve all kids.
- High on the \$\$ amount.
- How come Acton does not have enough fields if fields are let out to out-of-town users?
- Where do they stand with the overall financing?
- Eligibility –yes/no?
- Cost/benefit relationship. What have we really gotten out of Leary Field?
- IMA needed, probably.

468 Main St Access

- We bought the property for the land. Now we get more and more committed to the house.
- Would make meeting room available and offices accessible to the public.
- Closest extra meeting room to Town Hall.
- Lot of money, though.
- Is this a CPC project?

AML window restoration

- Which ones are they?
- Just more windows!
- Dean needs to get quote!

Town Hall Tower Clock

- Needs work.
- Wonderful historic preservation project.
- BoS 2nd to lowest ranked.
- Once repaired, how long will it last? Warranties?

Windsor Building Interior

- Lowest on BoS priority list.
- With exterior restoration is funded/done, interior is maybe not a priority? Could revisit this another time.
- Functional difference to Asa Parlin House?
- Is the floor safe for use?

PROJECT HEARINGS

OSC – Open Space Set Aside Fund, \$400,000

Presenter: Peter Ashton

(The proponent had a PowerPoint presentation and provided a handout.)

Asking for \$400,000, consistent with previous years. Several possible land purchases are in the works. Peter provided a handout with a list of some of the parcels “in play” according to the OSC ranking.

HDC/SATSAC – Landscape Mitigation at S.A. Train Station, \$150,000

Presenters: Katherine Acerbo-Bachmann (HDC Chair), David Martin (SATSAC Chair), and Dave Hahn (HDC)

(The proponent provided a handout of landscaping sketches.)

The entire MBTA Station project is about \$10M. The MBTA has a \$60,000 budget for landscaping. The HDC sees the landscaping as critical to making the design appropriate for the historic district. The proposal envisions three primary locations for additional landscape features to provide screening and to soften the visual impact of the long concrete platforms.

In response to questions, the proponent indicated that the MBTA would own and maintain the plantings. The planting selection is critical and very limited, due to requirements for maintenance on the tracks. The proponents would add the funding to the T's budget, and the T would have to contract it out. Most likely they would use the same contractor, with a change order.

The only opportunity for leverage would be possibly from the Rail Trail project. A licensed landscape architect is donating his time to generate the drawings (which amount to \$1000's of leverage) and may be able to provide a bid sheet on possible plantings to see how far our money would go.

Phasing is possible (the plaza planting would be 1st priority), but each phase would require a change order that would add cost so it would not be as cost-effective.

Need to check on the legality of providing funding to the MBTA from the CPC (and if there are any restrictions/requirements). The MBTA would go to bid before Town Meeting, so our funding would have to be added on after the fact. The MBTA was required to have a wetlands planting plan to prevent people from intruding on the wetlands on the southwest side of the site.

Andy is concerned about the possibility of the MBTA running out of money for the project and not spending the full \$60,000 (reducing the leverage), and also about the fact that we don't have any concrete plans for the landscaping.

We need more info on the relationship between the proponent and the MBTA, and documentation of the approval by the MBTA for the proposed landscaping.

Citizen comments:

Sean Hanley, 16 Maple St, (SATSAC)—It takes money to produce the plans and budget. We have a good working relationship with the MBTA and their approval of the landscaping would be a formality.

Michaela Moran (SATSAC and HDC)—The project is necessary if the station is built, in order to soften the visual impact on the area and to make the station fit in with the historic area of South Acton.

HCD Preservation Loan Program, \$150,000

Presenters: Katherine Acerbo-Bachmann (HDC Chair)

This project is intended to help preserve the historic buildings in town. The fund would provide zero-percent loans for building projects, such as replacing windows or siding with historically accurate materials. One open question is whether to restrict the fund for use on historic buildings or to allow buildings on the Cultural Resources List to use the fund. The HDC has worked out some details with a bank that would manage the fund and loan approval process, and the HDC and the BOS would approve the projects for eligibility. The bank would do credit checks, title checks, set up the lien etc. pro bono as a community service. There would be an historic lien on the property. There is a possibility of charging a 1% interest rate to grow the funds over time. There are many details on the specific roles of the Town Boards and the bank that need to be worked out over the coming weeks.

In response to questions, Walter explained that Town Counsel's review raises some questions about the eligibility of this project for CPC funding, and also indicates that the CPC should set the criteria for funding. The CPC would look to HDC to provide those criteria. Arlington's program had a loan as large as \$100,000 (paid back in a year), but most of Arlington's loans are \$5,000 - 7,000, over 10-12 years. The amount of \$150,000 for this program was chosen to provide ample funds for \$5,000 - \$7,000 loans, so that no potential borrower is unable to use the program due to lack of funds.

We need to get an answer to the Town Counsel question sooner rather than later, so we can be judicious in our allocation of existing funds. There is a question about whether each loan would require a preservation restriction since the fund comes from the CPC, and how much this would cost for each loan, and who would fund and oversee this.

The fund could be established with maybe as little as \$100,000, but the HDC wouldn't want to establish the fund with less. (The bank requires a certain percentage to be held in escrow [less than 10%?]) There is also a possibility of working out a deal with the bank to offer a regular bank loan in addition to the CPC 0% loan, as part of a total loan package to a borrower. Loans over \$7,500 would require a mortgage, which the bank would not be willing to do pro bono.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will be a tour of the library window and belfry, 468 Main Street, and the Windsor Street building, given by Dean Charter, beginning at 10am on Saturday, December 17, 2011. The tour will begin in the historic section of the Memorial Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Sghia-Hughes, Clerk